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The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You.



A LECTURE by

C. Jinarajadasa, M.A., (Cantab).

(Vice-President of the Theosophical Society)

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The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You.

O YOU who are Christians, the phrase the "Kingdom of Heaven" must be very familiar. It occurs again and again in the Gospels. Sometimes it is called the "Kingdom of God." The phrase is somewhat mysterious, because it does not mean only a place, but also a state or When we are told, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," we naturally imagine that for our earthly tribulations there is promised to us the reward of eternal life in heaven. But on the other hand when the call goes forth, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," obviously the significance is not a place beyond the grave, but a condition of mind here and now. When, again, we are admonished, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," obviously the phrase is used as a symbol of spiritual experiences which can be realized here on earth. Similarly too is it when we take that beautiful phrase that we must be as little children, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." We cannot imagine that there we have a reference merely to heaven above, because in heaven there cannot be only children. We feel intuitively that what Christ meant is that there must be such a change in our human nature as brings us back to an innocence and integrity of childhood, if we are to enter His kingdom. In different words we have a similar symbolical significance when Christ says that the aposties are to "preach the kingdom of God."

This phrase, then, when considered in its largest aspect, signifies a kind of perfection, not only an outer perfection which will change earth from poverty to plenty, from misery to joy, but also an inner change. It is this inner change which is obviously intended when we are given in the parable the simile of the kingdom of heaven as a "pearl of

great price"; when a man knows such a pearl exists he sells all he has in order to obtain that pearl.

There is then offered by Christ an ideal of human perfection possible for men here on earth which He calls the kingdom of heaven. I think you will all agree that in that ideal the supreme characteristic must be that our will is right, that it is rightly set, so that we can will nothing which is contrary to the divine will, and therefore we do all things which are in consonance with God. The sense of divine things surely must be the supreme attribute of him who comes to the kingdom. But for the most part, when we think of the kingdom of heaven, we connect a kind of negativity with it. For instance, when you think of your Christian heaven, you think of a place where everything is blissful for you, but it is a negative bliss so far as this earth is concerned. It is a quiescent kind of heaven where you will live in glory singing hymns, but not doing anything very active, so far as the universe is concerned; from there in heaven, though you are wrapt in glory, nothing will be done by you to change the sad conditions of earth. That is why I say that the conception which one finds of heaven in Christianity is that it is blissful but not creative. Similarly is it when one looks into the Christian mind to find out what is meant by a state of spirituality. There is a large element of passivity about it; the spiritual life is looked upon as far removed from ordinary life; it is thought of as wrapt in a cloud of glory but separate from this troublesome world of ours, where always so much needs to be done. In other words, there is a strong thought of passivity in the Christian conception of the kingdom of heaven.

Now, the strange thing is there was nothing of that passive element as Christ thought of the kingdom of heaven. To Him the kingdom of heaven is a powerful influence. If there is anything characteristic in what He tells you of the kingdom of heaven, it is that everything must be constantly changing in your life because you have found the kingdom. You become a centre of tremendous spiritual forces, after finding the kingdom. The quality of intensely creative activity which characterises one who comes to the kingdom is suggested in one of the lately discovered Logia or Sayings of Christ. Twenty-one years ago the Oxford expedition to Egypt discovered a page containing memoranda of a survey of various pieces of land. It was merely a business document, but on the other side of the document were recorded in Greek some savings of Christ. For the papyrus was a page out of a book which was evidently treasured by the early Christians.

In this wonderful fragment we have a statement by Christ, with regard to the kingdom, and what is most significant in it is that He gives us the great doctrine of evolution in its most significant aspect, linking that doctrine to all that we know of spiritual things. Let me read you the Logion or Saying, which in the manuscript is mutilated and to which here and there a few unimportant words have been restored by the scholars.

(Introduction). These are the wonderful words which Jesus the living Lord spake to and Thomas, and He said unto them, Everyone that harkens to these words shall never taste of death.

(Logion 1.) Jesus saith, Let not him who seeks cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished; astonished he shall reach the kingdom, and having reached the kingdom he shall rest.

Jesus saith, Ye ask who are those who draw us to the kingdom, if the kingdom is in heaven? . . . the fowls of the air, and all the beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, they are they which draw you, and the Kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whosoever shall know himself shall find it. Strive therefore to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are sons of the Father; and ye shall know yourselves.

Now listen to the commentary on this by the learned discoverers.

The idea seems to be that the divine element in the world begins in the lower stages of animal creation, and rises to a higher stage in man, who has within him the kingdom of heaven.

The transition from the inward character of the kingdom to the necessity of self knowledge is natural. Since the kingdom is not an external manifestation but an inward principle, men must know themselves in order to attain to its realization. The old Greek proverb, gnothi seauton (know thyself) is thus given a fresh significance.

It is this teaching which has now been forgotten in Christianity. It appeared in the early days of Christianity with tremendous significance, for in addition to "salvation" the early Church Fathers proclaimed that it was necessary for man to be deified. The perfect Christian was not merely "saved," but he also put on the nature of God. In these days you are not taught that the Christian ideal is not merely Salvation but also Deification. But one of the most striking facts is that in the early days of your religion this thought of the deification of man comes again and again. Thus we have in Theophilus, "Man by keeping the commandments of God may receive from him immortality as a reward and become God." And thus we have in another of the Church Fathers, Clement, "To be imperishable is to share Divinity." Hippolytus says, "Thy body

shall be immortal and incorruptible as well as thy soul. For thou hast become God. All things that follow upon the Divine nature, God has promised to supply thee for thou wast deified in being born to immortality." Again we have in Methodius "Every believer must through participation in Christ be born as a Christ." We find Athanasius saying, "He became man that we might be deified." So again and again we have the thought that to come to the kingdom is to put on the nature of God. With regard to later times, Harnack, one of the great scholars of the Higher Criticism, says: "After Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Origen, the idea of deification is found in all the Fathers of the ancient church, and that in a primary position. We have it in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Apolinaris, Ephraem Syrus, Epiphanius, and others, as also in Cyril, Sophronius, and late Greek and Russian theologians. In proof of it Psalm 82, verse 6, "I said, ye are gods," is very often quoted.

You will see, then, from what I have quoted to you as to the kingdom of God, that it means in some mysterious way to reveal or to realize Divinity. But what is that process? Now, unfortunately, your Christian religion is not approached by your ministers from the standpoint that life is a process for the realisation of the divine nature in man. They have so emphasised the thought of escape from a damnation, that as they present the problem of the world to men's consciousness, that problem does not suggest wisdom but rather doubts all along the line. But let us look at the problem of life as it was conceived by the early Church Fathers, and examine the process of Deification.

What can Deification mean but that we put on the nature of God? Suppose we were God, what should we see in life? We should see all things in terms of the Spirit. We should see nothing that was mere matter and substance, for matter would be a mirror of spiritual things. There would be no situation which would not reveal itself to us as an incident in a spiritual pageant; not the worst evil, not the greatest degradation which we may find but would show to us, were we God, something of a divine nature in them. To see all things in terms of Eternal Spirit must surely be an attribute of Deification.

But we, as we look at life, see nature "red in tooth and claw with ravin." We see men injuring each other, wickedness rampant, and even a positive delight in evil on the part of some. When we see the chaos in the world, when there scarce seems any reason guiding the events of this earth, can we see all things in the terms of Divinity? That is just what we are born for. That is the whole purpose of life, that we who have put on the robe of mortality may so make it a mirror that we can see the reflections on all sides of us of the activities of the Spirit.

This can only be by our shifting our centre, by going from the centre of our little self into that larger Self of the universe of which I spoke last Sunday, when I described the way in which we in India look upon the problem of the Spirit, the Atman. In these days something of that ancient conception of our daily life as a necessary expression of spiritual verities is beginning to be recognised to-That is why people are attracted to any form thought which refuses to emphasize their wickedness and instead emphasizes their goodness. In all forms of thought, like Christian Science and New Thought, like Theosophy, where the goodness of man and the instrinsic divine nature of things are emphasized, people lift their eyes from this dark earth and its sinfulness and see a haven of rest. long to realize everything as the Spirit, and so the "God Consciousness" as it is sometimes called, must characterize us every moment.

We are led to a recognition of the divine nature by every religion. Each religion is as a teacher who knocks at the doors of the hearts of its followers, in order to make them realize that the truths of the religion are a part of their own inmost self. When Christ gives you His message and illustrates it by His life, what is it but a knocking at the doors of your soul to make you realize that His ideal of service is yours also. He offers to you an ideal, He places it before you and says, "Look, is it not splendid, wonderful and entrancing?" Yet He presents it only that you may realize that the ideal of service is not something apart from you but an intimate part of your nature, a jewel, a pearl of great price, which is within you, however much you think you cannot find when you look for it. Take Hinduism; every great Teacher of Hinduism knocks at the door of the heart of the Hindu to make him realize that the Unity is the characteristic of his real nature. He may need to study at first philosophy after philosophy to convince his mind that Unity and not diversity is the keynote of life: later he will find that the Unity is within himself. When the Lord Buddha preaches His message, He is all the time trying to rouse in men's minds the consciousness that Law, eternal Law, is part of their own inmost nature.

When you examine Zoroastrianism, with its great ideal of Purity in all things, you find it teaches men that Purity is inseparable from their highest self, and that however

much immersed in matter they become, they cannot become fundamentally impure. When you take Judaism and its ideal of Righteousness, what do you find? What did every prophet try to teach his hearers but that Righteousness is inseparable from the nature of man, that the man who lives unrighteously has but to assert his inevitable righteousness to become the man of God? And in Muhammadanism with its ideal of Renunciation to the will of God, we have once again that same knocking at the door of the human heart to make it realize that the ideal of Renunciation, however difficult it may seem in practice, is part of our own inmost nature. These ideals of Service, Unity, Law, Purity, Righteousness and Renunciation seem to us difficult to achieve, requiring life after life for their realization. Yet as a matter of fact, if life after life is required in the process of evolution, it is because we may release these virtues which are already within us. For we are each a fragment of God, and the perfection which God is in actuality, we are in possibility. The process which we call life and death and rebirth, in other words evolution, is the process of our discovering ourselves.

The great Teachers come in order that we may discover what is our fundamental nature. They come to teach men not so much the nature of God as the possibilities in man. Each of them as he lives on earth teaches us that we can train ourselves to that sense of divine things which the Teacher himself came to give. But as his teaching is presented to us, unfortunately we assent to it only with the mind, for we find it so difficult to make that teaching part of our true self. We accept the ideal with one part of our nature, but there is in us that other part which came up from the brute and which drags us into evil. Therefore there is a continual struggle within us. As a part of that struggle we break the laws of life, and pain is the natural result.

In every human heart there is some kind of pain, and so we ask, believing God to be omnipotent, to be as an all-loving Father, why should pain exist. First, pain exists because it is the result of our own action. God who has put a part of Himself into us gives us the freedom to do evil, and having once given us freedom to go contrary to law, He cannot stop the working of His own laws to save us from pain. So pain comes back to us as the reaping of what we have sown. But instead of asking why pain exists, it would be far better to approach the problem of pain from another angle. That is to ask the question, "Has pain any use to us?" The moment you put that question then all experiences in life give you the answer. If

you ask why should God permit pain and evil, then your question seems insoluble; but ask what is the use of pain, why you suffer, and then with a very little guidance you can see for yourself how pain is one way of releasing the divine nature. I say one way, because the divine nature can be released within us through joy; but unfortunately we are so dragged hither and thither by the lower element in us, that in the early stages of our evolution it is not an easy thing to learn through joy. Nevertheless, fundamentally, the purpose of evolution is not that men should learn through pain but that they should expand their natures through joy.

In these earlier stages, because we have not sufficient knowledge, because we are experimenting with life still somewhat blindly, we break laws and pain is the result. Now if you will look into life around you, into your own nature and into that of others, you will find that the important thing is not the pain which a man suffers but his attitude to the pain. Recall those times when there was some slight injury to the hand or limb which would make a child cry but which you forgot at once because you were busy, because you were intent on some activity. The mental attitude to the pain is the most important element in the problem, and not the mere nerve response to injury.

Therefore there are two possible attitudes to pain. One is resentment, which characterises most people; and the other is acquiesence. The usual attitude is to feel. "There is no reason why I should be given this suffering, I who have done all kinds of noble deeds for God. Why should so-and-so, who has not done as many things as I, go free? And even if I have deserved a little pain, yet I have done so much good, and why should I not be exempt? Surely God loves me as much as I love Him?" So we think and feel. We ask the question always with an element of resentment. The other possible attitude is acquiesence. But that is impossible, you will say. It is not, and that is the whole beauty of this problem of pain, for you can so understand pain that you do not resent it, so realize that the pain is yourself ,is part of your old self coming back again, that you will co-operate with it. Though your old self is an ugly self to contemplate to-day, yet it is you after all, and you can put up with that old self of yours and try to learn the lesson which it brings.

If a person will rightly exercise his reasoning faculty or his intuition, he can acquiesce in pain, not in any weakwilled way but with a profound spiritual quality. Take the case of the Christian who believes in God so deeply that whatever happens he says, "God's Will be done." Though he is crushed, he affirms with his inmost intuition that all is well and says, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." It is that same acquiesence in pain which results when you study the great Law of Karma, of action and reaction. After you have studied of sowing and reaping. the Law of Karma as Theosophy teaches it to you, you begin to realize that justice rules the world. Then both through your thinking and your feeling you realize that love is at the heart of everything. Suppose a person is full of agony on a bed of pain, and yet has the sense that either his pain is due to his Karma and therefore it is right, or it is the will of God and therefore there is loving kindness somewhere in the pain; as a result he releases striking spiritual attributes within him while he suffers the pain. One of the most beautiful things which can happen to you, provided you understand and acquiesce in pain, is growth in insight. One who has had a long illness, if he has nobly borne it, finds after it is over that he looks into the hearts of men with clearer eyes, and that he has a deeper sympathy with them, that in other words he has a profounder insight into all things of life. Much as we may resent at the first moment any pain which comes, if only we are wise we would realize that pain can lead us from confusion to clear thinking, from the fog of speculation into the clear light of realization. Insight supremely comes in the wake of pain if nobly borne. Equally so is it after you have gone through trials and difficulties in doing that which is right, that is, your duty; after the pain is over, one priceless possession is yours, and that is your rightness to the world. You have done your duty, and having done it at the cost of pain, you are more four-square to all things in the world. And it is not a little thing to carry about with you that sense of rightness, which leads you to discover truth in many of its beautiful aspects.

It is through pain that constantly we discover the larger self. Let me tell you here an ancient story which narrates an incident in the life of the Lord Buddha. A young woman came to Him with her dead child, for she could not imagine that the little thing which she loved was dead, and coming to the Master she said, "Sir, can you not cure my child?" And He looked at her and saw that she could not understand, and so He said, "Yes, I can cure him, but you must bring the necessary herb; and the medicine is this, a little handful of mustard seed, but take care that you do not accept it from any house where father or mother or son or servant has died." Then Kisagotami went from house to house and asked, "Will you give me a

little mustard seed?" Everyone said, "Gladly," but just as she was going to accept it she asked, "Has anyone died here?" They said, "Yes," and they mentioned that the father or the mother or the servant or the son had died. She went from house to house and she could not find a single house where death had not entered. Then she came back at last to the Teacher, and told Him that she could not find the mustard seed for there was no house which had not suffered loss by death. Only then did the Teacher point out to her, "Your woe is a whole world's woe, that which has happened to you happens to all." In that way He taught her to rise from her little self to discover the larger self of the world.

That is the case with every pain if nobly borne. You break down the limitations of your little self and discover the larger self. Through pain once again if nobly borne, you can radiate tremendous strength. You would hardly imagine that a man on a bed of pain could radiate strength. But I have been through hospital wards when I have been oppressed with the problem of my little self, and as I have looked at those beds of pain or been present when the wounds were dressed, my pain has lifted, and I have gained strength with which to do my work in a fuller and grander way. From one who did not know he was radiating strength, I received the strength of which I stood in need. Pain nobly borne is one of the most inspiring things, both to the one who is suffering and to those who are round him. One poet has very strikingly given the signification of pain thus nobly borne.

Sorrow was there made fair
Passion wise, tears a delightful thing,
Silence beyond all speech a wisdom rare;
She made her sighs to sing,
And all things with so sweet a sadness move
As made my heart at once both grieve and love.

Pain can draw out of the beholder a sympathy that is so spiritualised that it leads him into other divine virtues. Therefore pain has indeed a use for us, and that is to show us things one by one as parts of one Spirit.

Mental and emotional pain can have the same spiritualising quality. One of the greatest griefs possible in life is the loss of those whom we love. When that happens again and again, the question is asked why God should take away from us those we love who are so absolutely necessary to our life. The answer is this, that God never takes away from us any one we love. He only takes away from us the non-eternal part which we love. None of those we love die. It is not they who die; it is we who die to them. If we look at the problem from that angle, then we

shall be able to understand the mystery of spiritualization. If you love another and all the time you see him only in terms of his mortality, in terms of the things which change, the smile, the tender glance, the touch of the hand, all the things which are merely a reflection in matter of the things of the Spirit; if you cling to the reflection; if the tone of voice becomes to you more and more the person; if his bodily presence, the mere magnetism of his physical body becomes for you the soul; then slowly you begin to see less of the real soul and more and more of his temporary garment. And when he "dies," as you say of him, no change comes to him. He is still what he was; only, when his body of flesh dies, the great change is in you, because you have thought of him wrongly, and when the mortal part of him is dead, he is dead to you. But the whole problem of true loving is to see the beloved as the Spirit. That is the glory of loving, to be given the opportunity of a wonderful vision of spiritual things, to see the one whom we love as the bringer of a great blessing, as calling out from us capacity after capacity for sacrifice.

If he can be all these things, surely he is the Spirit and that Spirit can never die. He can reveal himself to us only in the flesh, but the flesh is only the mirror to reflect to us his divine nature. If only we could so understand, then there can be no death of any one whom we love. If when your beloved puts aside his body of flesh you say, "My loved one is gone," you have never truly known your loved one, even when you thought you loved him. You knew only the mortal part of him.

You will find that sometimes death gives you a greater sense of reality of the one whom you loved, that just because the temporal qualities of mortal flesh and all the trivialities of life are removed from your conception of him, he stands out more luminously. A person who, as we say, is "dead" is sometimes far more alive to us who love him than when he was alive in his garb of flesh. It is only when we learn to love rightly, and through loving find the immortal self, that we know for an utter certainty that those we love can never pass away. When the physical garment is removed, then we can see the one we love in a more glorious vision. If only we could die! But we are The one thing that is necessary is that we afraid of death. should become transformed and know what we truly are. What is necessary is not to grieve over death, but to try to think of each we love as he was in his happier, most loving moods, when he was all that was ideal, for everything ideal in one we love is just a partial expression of the divine nature within him.

So remember, that those whom we love do not die. It is we who die to them. Sometimes we have died to them many years before physical death has taken them. We may go on clamouring and asserting that we love them, but so long as we have not learnt to see the Spirit within them, and love it and cherish it, then, much as we may love the body, we have not fully seen the soul of our beloved. We come to earth to discover those whom we love not as flesh but as Spirit.

On all sides of us as we live our life there are failures. It is so difficult to achieve, so easy to fail. Even one failure seems to make success impossible for us to achieve. But if you fail nobly, if behind your attempt there was an ideal, if you tried to succeed not for the self but in order that something might be done for another or for humanity, then you will find that your failure itself pushes you to success. That is one of the characteristics of a man who has tried nobly and has failed; there is for him no ultimate failure. The spirit of man is ever striving towards the highest, and every unselfish failure is in reality a step to success, to that success which he cannot achieve at once for lack of impetus behind him. All our little faults of each day, if only we could look at them rightly, can be seen as leading us to inevitable success.

As men look at themselves and see old age coming on and faculty after faculty diminishing, memories disappearing, they think they are beginning to be less, that somehow life is dealing harshly with them. It is perfectly true that memory gets worn away with the wearing of the brain, but what matters if memories should go? If all the detailed fragments of knowledge with which our brain is stored disappear, who is the loser? Not the real "I." What are all the incidents of the daily life intended for? To give us knowledge? No; but to give us Wisdom, to give us the right attitude to life, that instinctive sensing of what is the true from the untrue, the real from the unreal. We could not have all that if our memory were continually to bring back to us all the details of the past. You and I need to pray that we may forget, not that we may remember. If there is always a right attitude to life, there is a mysterious process ever taking place of sublimation, and from all the detailed experiences we gain a wisdom. Do we not see that in old people, who have not been immersed in the excitement and turmoil which we have in our generation, who have seemingly had less experience in their youth? Yet such is the sublimation of their experiences that they are full of wisdom now. Take to them some problem of this year with all its complexities, and they will say something wise which astonishes you but which gives you a solution. That is because they have transmuted memory to wisdom. And when we grow old and our memories go, and we cannot think of words and names and places, let us be thankful for it, for it releases us from our past selves. If we have lived rightly, then when we are old we become centres of spiritualising influence, giving the right tone to life, illustrating that charity and understanding which are greater than all the knowledge of the world.

The element of tragedy in our lives is due to the fact that we refuse to see the soul element in life. Now the kingdom of heaven is the soul element in life. It is here and now, for each one of us, if we will learn to think rightly, and therefore to feel rightly and to act rightly. can find the right way of thinking; seek till you must find. Your problem in life is to seek that right fundamental attitude to life from which you can see the whole world of materiality transmuting itself into Spirit. It does not matter what is the philosophy you profess, whether you are Christian or Buddhist, whether you are Theosophist or Agnostic, so long as you have always the attitude of going out of the little self into the larger self, so long as every experience is seen in terms of a larger humanity, so long as the pain which is yours is seen by you as in some way mirroring the pain of humanity.

When all life becomes transmuted by you in terms of the Spirit, then the kingdom of heaven is within you. That is the supreme teaching which all the great Teachers give you. Every religion gives in one form or the other the message that the kingdom of heaven is within you. Every experience tells you the same. It is what a great sculptor of Italy, Michael Angelo, meant when he said, "The more the marble wastes the more the statue grows." This statue is the divine self which is within you, and it is struggling to come out of the mass of your experiences. It gives you into your own hand your will, to release with it the divine image within your nature. Each pain, each hardship of life, is your own Divine Self knocking at the door of your heart and mind and saying, "Let me enter, I who am the Divine Spirit."

If you live in the light of whatever is the ideal which you profess, and resolutely renounce the little self, and identify yourself with the purposes of the larger Self, then slowly you will find that your little self becomes linked to all the selves round you, that you who are an individual with limitations begin nevertheless to link to you self after self. You link first the friend whom you love, and then

others, acquaintances, strangers, till finally even your enemy becomes even as a part of yourself. And this larger self is then ever by you, and the Spirit of the universe descends and makes you one with it. Then all things round you, the woods and the clouds, the sky and the sea, every moment of bliss which came to you once, all the bliss and the glory which the world has ever had and will have, all these begin to dwell within you.

Every man will attain to Divinity, for the kingdom of heaven is within him. That is the message which life gives you, the great secret which life has for you, the great attempt which life is making to draw you out of yourself, so as to show you everything in terms of the Spirit. The heritage which the ages offer you is the kingdom of heaven, which Christ said is "within you." Go and possess the kingdom and you shall know that every sacrifice which you make for the sake of the larger Self is worth while, that life is not one of woe and tragedy, but of intense joy of sacrifice. For you are one with God, and God is one eternal Sacrifice of giving. The more you give, the more you will realize His nature in you, and realize too that the kingdom of heaven is within you.



Theosophical Society

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